

FWP COMMISSION AGENDA ITEM COVER SHEET

Meeting Date: April 12, 2012

Agenda Item: Blackleaf WMA grazing lease renewal – Pollock Ranch

Division: Fish & Wildlife, Wildlife Bureau **Action Needed:** Approval of Final Rule/Action

Time Needed on Agenda for this Presentation: 10 minutes

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Background

This is a proposal to renew a grazing lease with the Pollock Ranch on the Blackleaf Wildlife Management Area for 2012. Beginning in 2002, a four-pasture rest-rotation grazing system was established with the Pollock Ranch on 9,000 acres of the Blackleaf WMA to improve vegetative quality. This grazing agreement is aimed at using cattle grazing to maintain or enhance vegetative quality on the Blackleaf WMA for the benefit of wildlife. Year-round and seasonal forage for elk, mule deer, pronghorn antelope and other big game will be maintained. Public hunting access on the lessee's property will also be incorporated within the grazing lease.

Public Involvement Process & Results

In February 2012, FWP Region Four issued a draft environmental assessment and solicited public comment for the proposed Blackleaf Wildlife Management Area grazing agreement with the Pollock Ranch. At this writing, that draft EA has not been finalized nor has a Decision Notice been rendered. Provided a favorable decision is made, this lease proposal will be presented to the FWP Commission at its April meeting.

Alternatives and Analysis

The alternative would be to not utilize the grazing management plan on the Blackleaf WMA. Lower quality and less abundant forage production on the WMA would be expected over the long-term. The Pollock Ranch would be required to find additional grazing pasture elsewhere.

Agency Recommendation & Rationale

FWP R4 would continue a four-year rotational grazing plan on the WMA. Continuation of the proposed grazing plan would allow cattle to be used as a management tool to maintain vegetative quality on the WMA by stimulating re-growth of native grasses and forbs for the benefit of wildlife. The Pollock Ranch would benefit from the availability of early and late summer pasture for their cattle. Public hunting opportunity would be allowed on the lessee's property.

Proposed Motion

I move to approve the Blackleaf WMA grazing lease with the Pollock Ranch for 2012.